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AUTHOR Smokoski, Fred; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Twenty-five trainable mentally handicapped young adults were placed in two junior high schools. The curriculum included communication, basic knowledge, family living and personal hygiene, work preparation, and body usage. Among the concerns expressed by the children's parents were that the junior high youth would not accept the retarded students and that normal young adults would mistreat the handicapped. Among the problems encountered were difficulty ordering suitable materials and equipment, physical facilities in the schools, and policies and procedures regarding such things as field trips, insurance requirements and general information. After 1 year, the program was considered extremely successful. (SBH)

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TITLE: The Assimilation of Two Classes of T.M.H. Children Into a Typical Junior High School *

PRESENTERS:

Dr. Fred Smokoski	Coordinator, Mentally Handicapped Programs
Mrs. Fran Blake	Instructional Paraprofessional
Mrs. Helen Hamlin	Parent
Mrs. Jane Main	Teacher

*This presentation is divided into four parts. Each speaker's pages are identified with the name of that individual.

EC 110 374

Dr. Fred Smokoski
Coordinator, Programs for M H
640 N. Emporia
Wichita KS 67214

THE ASSIMILATION OF TWO CLASSES OF T.M.H. CHILDREN INTO A TYPICAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

BACKGROUND

Wichita, Kansas has a junior high school population of just over 11,000 students. Of that number 600 are identified as exceptional, with nearly 50 carrying the label of trainable mentally handicapped (t.m.h.). Prior to 1975 all school aged persons identified as t.m.h. received their education in two segregated locations and programs within the city. One location and program was designed to serve individuals who ranged in age from 6 to 22 and the other, a combination academic and sheltered workshop program worked with young adults aged 16 to 22. Beginning in the fall of 1975 three elementary school locations were selected to house approximately 25 t.m.h. children each. These 25 children were divided into three groups, based primarily on chronological age and ability, and the fall of 1975 marked the beginning of the assimilation of t.m.h. children into the regular or typical public school program. Toward the completion of the 1975-76 school year, it was decided that the older of these children along with certain others selected from the still operating segregated programs be placed into two junior high schools. There was, as could be expected, a good deal of resistance to the movement. Not surprisingly a large part of that resistance came from parents who were quite satisfied to have their children located in programs which, historically, had been safe, secure, protective and perhaps not too demanding. Nevertheless the move was made and this opened the way for the next step.

RATIONALE & PROCEDURE

It was decided, following a successful few months, that the next logical step would be to locate classes in the regular or typical junior high schools. The t.m.h. youngsters, owing to their age and size, were out of place in an elementary school setting. The elementary school setting in addition was not in keeping with the philosophy of the least restrictive environment. There was also some pressure from a few parents to remove their children from the more segregated setting and place

them into the regular elementary school locations. If a move to the junior high schools were not made then a bottleneck would have been created at the elementary school level and an environment approaching that of the more segregated programs would again occur.

Two junior high school locations, on opposite sides of the city, were determined to be necessary. There were thirty young adults who were thought to be eligible for junior high school placement. Fourteen of the thirty were assigned to one junior high location with the remaining sixteen assigned to the other. The number of children necessitated two teachers and two classrooms since Kansas state law limits the size of t.m.h. classes to ten children or young adults.

The criteria used to select the junior high school students were: chronological age, social maturity, language skills, adaptability, mobility skills and the likelihood of successful community vocational placement. Not all the criteria had to be met at the same high level. The referrals to the junior high program were made on the basis of teacher, supervisor, and administrator judgment. And in one case by error, although that one case became one of the biggest successes of the program.

Among the problems met and considered were: the location of the junior high schools, transportation of the students, and the acceptance of the students by the building administrator and staff, the other teachers and the other young adults. The most crucial problem was encountered in helping the parents overcome their fears of moving the children from the relatively protected environment of the elementary schools to the larger, more harsh world of a typical junior high school. For some parents and young adults, the move would be even more drastic since the setting would change from the segregated location to that of the junior high school.

Through a series of meetings and visits with parents, administrators, teachers and children the problems were resolved. For reasons of size of school as well as location two of the smaller junior high schools in Wichita were selected. The

parents were notified of the coming move and a series of meetings in and out of the schools were held to allay any fears parents may have had. The parents did express some real concerns and difficulties in accepting the placement and Mrs. Hamlin will speak about those shortly.

Meetings were held with building administrators and teachers to explain the characteristics of the children, to describe the program and the reasons for the small number of children per class and to elicit their help in making the transition a success. The move was accomplished in the fall of 1976 - not without some minor problems - but, overall very successfully.

PROGRAM

The curriculum, about which Mrs. Main, a teacher and Mrs. Blake, an instructional paraprofessional will speak in detail, consists of:

Communication -	Modes Listening Language Activities Language Skills
Basic Knowledge -	Information Numbers Awareness Social Studies Safety
Family Living & Personal Hygiene -	Grooming Food Clothing Houschold Items Family Chores Health Habits
Work Preparation -	Self Control Personality Group Participation Social Skills Vocational Readiness
Body Usage -	Coordination Fitness Eye Hand Coordination

In addition, at one school the young adults work for pay in the cafeteria. This has led to units on banking, spending, budgeting, etc. At the other school the students have made items of leather and wood which they have sold.

I am very pleased to be a part of this panel. I am representing the parents of the students who attend the T.M.H. classes in the Wichita Junior High School program. I have visited and conferred with about one-third of the parents in this year's classes and have contacted three parents of young adults entering the T.M.H. class in the fall of 1978. I wanted to learn all I could about the concerns of the other parents and possibly the child as we enter into another phase of educating our handicapped child.

I listed the following questions and in visiting with the parent either incorporated the questions into the conversation or else put down an answer as the parent offered the information during the course of the conversation.

1. What was your first reaction when you learned that your child was to enter the Junior High School program?
2. What was your greatest concern?
3. Are you pleased with the program?
4. Do you have a constructive criticism?
5. What are your concerns at this time?
6. Do you feel that this program is meeting the educational needs of your child?
7. What would you like changed?
8. Do you have a goal for your child?

Parents of handicapped children dread change. It causes an emotional stress for the child and family and the adjustment period does create a discord that we wish we could avoid. However, most of the parents contacted were pleased and delighted that their child was going into a T.M.H. class in the Junior High School. In May preceeding the fall term, the parents and children were invited to spend a day in the classroom, eat lunch in the cafeteria amd meet the other young people involved. It helped every parent and child that attended as it gave a feeling that your concerns would be considered and that the teachers and the staff would cooper-

ate in every way they could. Before the school year started the concerns expressed by the parents were:

1. The junior high age youth would not accept the retarded students.
2. The T.M.H. students could not cope with the normal young people. They would be intimadated, feel inferior and different.
3. Normal young adults would mistreat the handicapped.
4. The junior high school young people are noisy, boistrous, active and create an atmosphere that confuses, excites and fatigues our children.
5. The parents were fearful that their child was not ready for junior high.
6. The parents were apprehensive of having their child eat in the cafeteria.
7. The parents were concerned that the restrooms would lack supervision.
8. The halls in a junior high school become crowded and congested, would there be discipline in the halls?
9. Would the classrooms be kept at a minimum enrollment rather than the maximum.

Every parent expressed the opinion that they are pleased with the T.M.H. program. Not one parent has retained a concern which they expressed prior to the beginning of school. The young people in the junior high schools have accepted and gone out of their way to be kind, thoughtful and generous with the T.M.H. children. The teachers and staff have cooperated beautifully.

However, there are concerns which need to be expressed. I did find that the concerns of the parents of the 17 and 18 year olds are different from the concerns of the parents of the 13 and 14 year old students. Parents of the older students are thinking more in terms of vocational training for their child. In the opinion of some, this past year has not included enough vocational training at one school. The parents need to be informed of the next step in the education of their child. At this time the parents are uncertain as to what the program will evolve into when the child leaves the junior high program.

There is a great need throughout the Special Education program for record keeping. A student's records will now include an evaluation of the individual child's

past academic achievements and accomplishments. Each year much time had been spent testing, evaluating, and searching for the educational needs of each child. This year, with the I.E.P. and the involvement of parents who desired to get involved a great deal more evaluating was done. Most parents feel that their child could do much more in the basic academic areas if a reinforcement movement existed at this level. True, the child does not retain everything he learned during the past year, but the lack of actual knowledge must not be confused with lack of response, an area we hope will be explored and examined closely by psychologists. Parents of the handicapped feel that their child progresses from one phase of development into the next. We need evaluation to show this development and an instrument is being developed by teachers to do this. The grade card being used now expresses this if you compare them, however, few parents knew how their child was being evaluated. A developmental card might be better for some parents. In fairness to the teachers, however, I should say that there have been opportunities to have the evaluation procedure explained.

Most parents would like there to be more exercise activity, especially swimming. A swimming program was begun this past year at the Y.W.C.A. in Wichita. Volunteers, instructors and teachers all worked at getting the children into the water and teaching survival tactics and swimming skills. This program will continue next year in an expanded form. Many of the volunteers were "normal" children. Several parents asked questions concerning the gym program.

Emphasis is placed on manners and acceptable social behavior. Some students need this and for others it should not be emphasized. A teacher should observe and learn the needs of the child from the standpoint of the home environment.

Treat the 17 and 18 year olds like young adults. The arts and crafts should be geared to nearer that age. No more bunnies, pumpkins or jack-in-the-boxes! They are teenagers and should be treated as young adults. Art activities are provided by art specialists and they need to be aware of our children's needs.

If a child has an individual skill such as singing well, the school should make certain that this child has choral experience. Some T.M.H. children are talented and the training of this talent certainly could enhance the performance of that child.

Much more work should be done in the vocational field. It must be stressed and stressed! I understand that the high school program will be very definitely involved in job location, job selection and on-the-job training.

Communication! Almost every parent contacted felt they would like to know what is actually going on in the classroom. They all felt they could contribute to the child's development if they knew exactly what the teacher was presenting to the students. The T.M.H. child does not relate what has been done during the course of that day even with questioning. We need a closer relationship with the teacher. Communication, however, is a two-way street. Parents need to take advantage of invitations to the school for I.E.P. meetings and reviews so that they can become aware. The parents also need to initiate communication with the teacher.

Field trips are fine, but they need to be limited. Our children go with us to the grocery store, to restaurants, to church, etc. Many times such trips are repeats of what was done in grade school.

The social life of a T.M.H. young adult does not exist with their peer group outside of the classroom in most cases. These young people need to be included in activities within the schools with supervision, of course. One highlight this year was "Spirit Week", an activity which included the whole school. The teachers in Special Education put great effort into including their classrooms in this event. One day the students were asked to dress as their favorite T.V. character. My daughter chose to be Big Bird. We made a costume (which she helped complete by sewing seams, pasting on feathers etc.). She was chosen as having the best costume in the entire school. The selection process involved competing with the other students on the stage, saying who she was, and I was informed that she handled this

very well. This was a great feat for her as she is lacking in social involvement with her peer group.

There is a need for a parent group and if possible this should be started in the fall. If a program is being started in your school system, encouragement should be given to start this at the time that the classes are started.

In conclusion, again we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the student body of the Junior High Schools. Their behavior has been superb! The staff and administrators have handled this with great concern and consideration. The teachers have certainly done an outstanding job and we commend them for their efforts. Thank you.

PROBLEMS IN BEGINNING

In beginning our program we had to deal with many problems. Some were real, some were only imagined. We will deal with the problems first.

To our surprise, problems with the general student population have been almost nonexistent. Our students have been readily accepted by the "regular" students. We have been working regularly with the general student population on understanding our students. We have had student helpers and have extended a welcome to all students. We have had orientation for them in our rooms and in their classes. In these orientations we try to explain why we are here, our rights, what we are about, what our program consists of, and that it could have been one of them.

Surprisingly enough the teachers were slower accepting us than the students. We conducted inservice meetings with the staff about our program many times. We have had teas to get them acquainted with us. The thing we try to stress is for them to communicate with our students - even if it is just "Hi, how are you?" We do not ask for treatment much different from that of normal students. We try to teach our students the names of the staff so they can call them by name. We let the staff know at the first meeting we would not be confined to our room all day long. We let them know in the beginning that our kids would be going throughout the building. We really had to push for contact.

After they knew we were really here to stay we had much assistance to our program and our students from the staff. The following list contains some of the things which have been done:

A. A teacher donated exercise equipment.

B. Typing Class made up flyers, programs, etc.

C. The Principal attended a puppet show with us.

D. Home Ec. Class invited us to a Breakfast Sale and has loaned us cooking equipment.

E. T.M.H. staff and students have held a tea and invited all regular staff and student helpers.

F. The Machine Shop Classes have aided with woodwork items.

G. Art Department has shared supplies and has taken pictures of our students at work and play for the school Yearbook.

H. We have been invited to the English Department for Story Hour. The regular students wrote stories and illustrated them and read them to our students. They also visited our classes as a class and listened to our students express themselves.

I. We have mainstreamed successfully student council, p.e., and Red Cross representatives.

J. The regular music instructor took our students for 30 minutes daily and taught them songs regular students use.

K. The Nurse took interest in our students and included them in the health projects of the school and Red Cross. She also has driven her car to make field trips with us.

L. The social workers are interested in the students' well-being and have made many home visits.

M. The Principal pops in almost every day to chat with students. He is always asking if he can assist in any way.

N. The Counselor shows sincere concern and makes many visits.

O. The Assistant Principal and Principal direct observers to our Program.

P. The P.E. Department shares school uniforms with us for Special Olympics. The Principal wishes us well.

Q. The Custodian is always helpful and willing to assist.

R. Last but not least, the secretaries use our students for proctors and make them feel welcome in the Office. They also drop goodies by from time to time. Our staff?? Great!!

Ordering materials and equipment can be difficult. Most material is not suitable for our age students' interest level. Materials on their interest level is usually too difficult for them. In our system, materials are compiled into a large Special Education Materials Catalog. For the junior high T.M.H. level, however, most of the materials and equipment needed are not included. We use the home economics catalog in addition to our own catalog.

We expected our students to experience difficulty getting around the building To ease them into this we took trips for the first 4 days to all the places we would

be using. After the first two weeks we had very few students who could not find their way alone. The students now use the restrooms the regular students use, by themselves. They can use the shower facilities in the gym. Even though they know how to use the cafeteria, a paraprofessional is always with them. They use the library alone. The librarian often assists in selection of books.

Some of our concerns or problems centered around such things as budgetary considerations for supplies and equipment, physical facilities in the school, and policies and procedures regarding such things as field trips, insurance requirements and general information. Dr. Smokoski will speak to these concerns at the close of this presentation.

Curriculum

A. Communication

1. Encourage conversation with

   a. peers
   b. teachers
   c. general school population

2. Encourage student to look at listener and speaker

3. Books (books from library at own level ordered from Diagnostic Center)

   a. we assist in proper selection
   b. books are discussed in groups
   c we encourage students to try a variety

4. Reading

   a. work to maintain present level
   b. use natural surroundings for reading (signs, labels, recipes, magazines, newspapers)
   c. continue developing comprehension

5. Work to maintain printing and cursive writing. Develop skills in those who are weak in this area

6. Encourage better grammar

7. Encourage students to make sense when they talk

8. Train for listening

   a. audience
   b. adult group
   c. peer group

   strive toward responding properly and knowing substance

9. Respond to and remember simple verbal commands

10. Recognize humor and respond appropriately

11. Delivering oral messages

12. Ability to relate experiences to others

13. Dramatic play activities

   a. Gong Show
   b. Peabody Kit routines

14. Greeting visitors appropriately

15. Using the telephone

16. Encourage to use intelligible speech and appropriate volume.

B. Basic Knowledge

1. Encourage safe behavior

   a. stairs and halls
   b. group play
   c. on school vehicle

2. Teach to recognize poison

3. Recognize basic signs and crucial words

4. How to cross street

5. Fire safety

6. Teach personal information (say and write) name, address, city, state, zip, phone#, birthday

7. Names of school personnel

8. Days and months

9. Carrying out directions

10. Sorting, matching, comparing sizes, colors and shapes

11. Number concepts, addition, subtraction

12. Money identification and exchange

13. Telling time and time concept

14. Identifying own possessions and lets others know

15. Dressing for the weather

16. Realizes value of property

17. Can relate current events

18. Describing various jobs and titles

19. Recognizes community helpers

20. Recognizes present day famous persons.

C. Family Living and Personal Hygiene

1. Teach importance of and proper methods for

a. washing hands and face
b. brushing teeth
c. washing and combing hair

2. Importance for clean body and clothes

3. Cleaning and filing fingernails

4. Using grooming aids

a. comb and brush
b. dryers
c. curlers
d. nail files and clippers

5. Basic First Aid

a. cleaning wounds
b. applying ointment
c. putting on a bandaid

6. Setting a table

7. How to hold and use eating utinsels

8. Improving eating habits

9. Care of clothing

10. How to tie shoes

11. How to use buttons, snaps and zippers

12. Using the following tools to students' best ability:

a. broom
b. mop
c. sewing machine
d. vacuum cleaner
e. iron
f. washing machine
g. can opener (manual)
h. toaster

13. How to select proper key and unlock a series of doors

14. Planning and preparing meals

15. Serving a meal

16. Washing dishes

17. Folding various articles

18. Good posture

19. Proper diet

20. Checking appearance

21. Uses proper procedures for coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose.

D. Work Preparation and Cooperation with Others

1. Acceptance of authority

2. Acceptability by a variety of peers

3. Development of good work habits

4. Work toward student becoming self-critical of own work and desires improvement

5. Work to develop good attitude toward work

6. Traveling in community

7. Reasonable display of temper control

8. Acceptance of criticism

9. Feeling secure - even in new situations

10. Accepting changes in routine

11. Regulating own behavior

12. Controls self in peer conversation

13. Sharing with classmates

14. Protects own property

15. Telling the truth regardless of consequences

16. Being dependable without being reminded

17. To show leadership in various work or play activities

18. Appropriate response to acts of kindness

19. Participates in group activities readily and in a socially acceptable manner at:

    a. lunch
    b. assemblies
    c. field trips

20. Displaying acceptable table manners

21. Greeting peers

22. Offering appropriate apologies by self

23. Respects property of others

24. Acts courteously

25. Offers to help others without being told.

We have made leather caps, key chains, belts, and bracelets in our classes to sell and made enough profit for new leather tools and equipment. We have also made wood projects to sell. With the profit here we bought food supplies for our rooms and also bought lunch at a restaurant for each student at the end of the school year.

Our Support Personnel

Adaptive P.E., Music, Speech, Art

Last year we were blessed with the kindness of the music teacher who took our students for 45 minutes and taught regular music - not because she had to do so, but because she wanted to help. It was very much appreciated.

This year we had the services of a music teacher who has been trained for special education music. She works with the students four days a week 30 minutes per class.

We have for the second year the same art, speech and adaptive p.e. teachers who have established rapport with the students and know them and their habits, hopes, fears and anxieties.

Each teacher knows how to deal on an individual basis with our students. This is a great help. During these time periods, breaks and planning periods are worked out.

Without these people supporting our program many of our days would have been without a silver lining. We say a "Gold Medal" always for our support personnel.

EVALUATION

After one year the program was considered extremely successful. Regular class teachers in music and physical education as well as a Spanish instructor have voluntarily worked with the classes. The acceptance by the building administrators and the school staffs has been excellent. Several regular junior high school students have voluntarily served as big brothers and big sisters to the trainable students.

An additional classroom was added to each junior high school in 1977 which made the population at one school twenty-five and at the other twenty-four. An additional teacher was added at each school also.

Title IX not withstanding it was essential that there be at least one male teacher in each building, especially during the first year. The ladies managed very well at the beginning of this year when we lost one male teacher and did not find a replacement immediately but the recommendation is a valid one.

It should be noted also that the one common thread which needs to be a part of every meeting is honesty. It has been helpful also to insure that parents are involved from the very beginning and are kept informed.

FUTURE

The number of classes at each junior high building next year will be reduced to two. Plans have been made to promote two classes of young adults to a senior high school location. The same criteria has been used to select students for the classes and there are a total of sixteen young adults who will be promoted. The same formula of meetings will be followed as has been for the last two years. The location for this newest program is a high school in the center of the city. The decision was made primarily on the basis of accessibility from the students' homes and the availability of a very active job placement coordinator.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Any experience, especially a new one, is a learning situation. If the Junior High School T.M.H. Program were beginning this year there are certain elements of

the program which would be handled differently. Some of the concerns expressed by Mrs. Main and Mrs. Blake were concerns because just as the program was new to the Junior High School, the coordinator and teacher were new to the Wichita Public Schools.

Consideration needs to be given to an explanation of certain technical and administrative aspects of the t.m.h. program to all individuals concerned. The information about which budget buys what materials, which policy or procedure is appropriate, which form needs to be filled out for which administrator and the anticipation of new forms and procedures considered to be necessary. This type of information is available in scattered publications but it would be helpful if the more important and most pertinent bits of this information were more accessible to the teachers.

If your community has active groups or agencies which provide trips, transportation and other services to the program, it is essential that these agencies be made aware of the movement of groups or classes from school to school. If this is not done an important part of the program is missing.

Physical considerations are also important - the room needs to be of adequate size for 10 students, a teacher, a paraprofessional and all their paraphernalia. If the home economic facilities are not immediately available the 220 J wiring may want to be added to accomodate an electric range. Availability and accessibility of water, sink etc. are also essential items, as is a refrigerator. Programs can operate without these, but it certainly makes the teachers happier and the program more effective.

Not enough can be said about keeping the parents informed. Those of you who are familiar with the politics of a school system realize that certain steps, procedures or protocol need to be followed before information about changing programs, school etc. can become public. Parents, at times, do not accept this explanation. In order to combat this it is important to be encouraging, available and honest in your dealing with parents.